



Saga

FIONA STAPLES

CHAPTER
TWENTY
EIGHT

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN



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TWENTY
EIGHT

Saga

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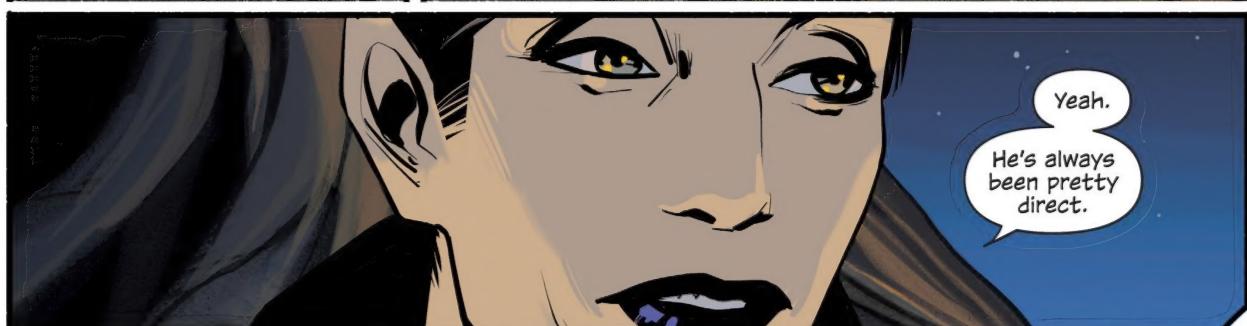
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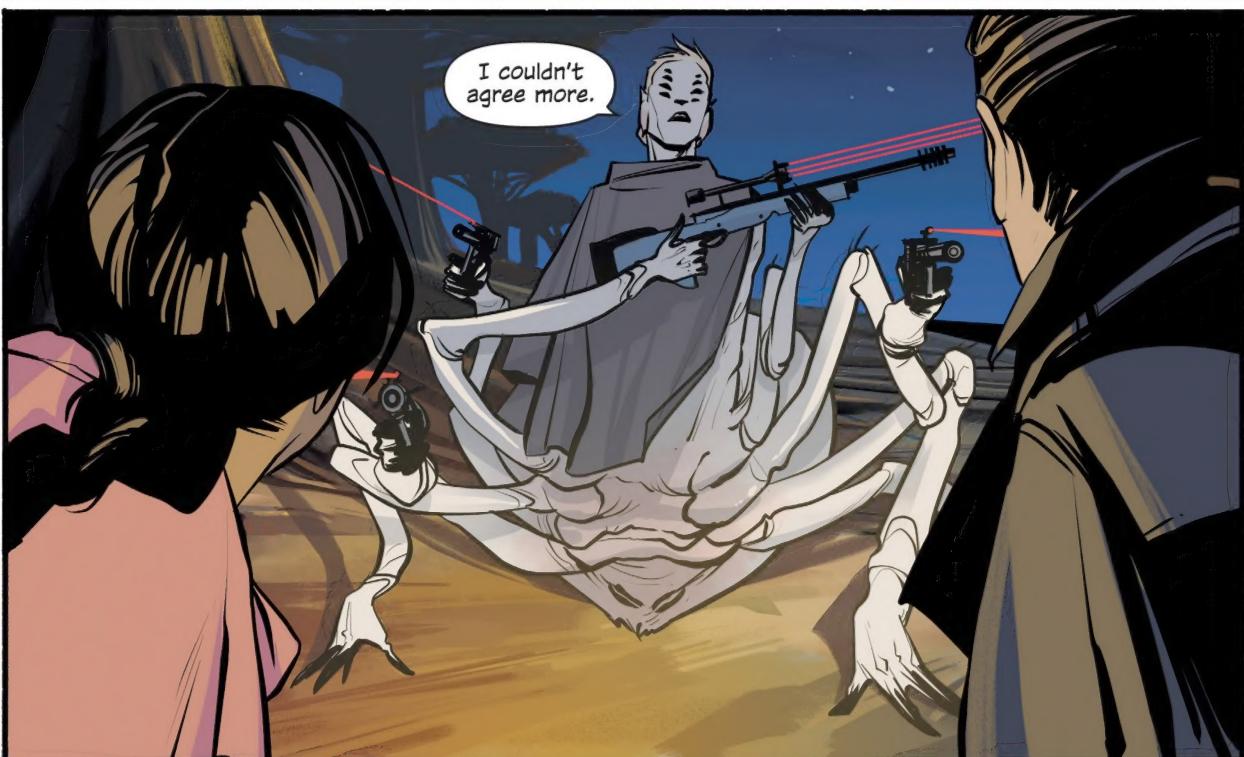
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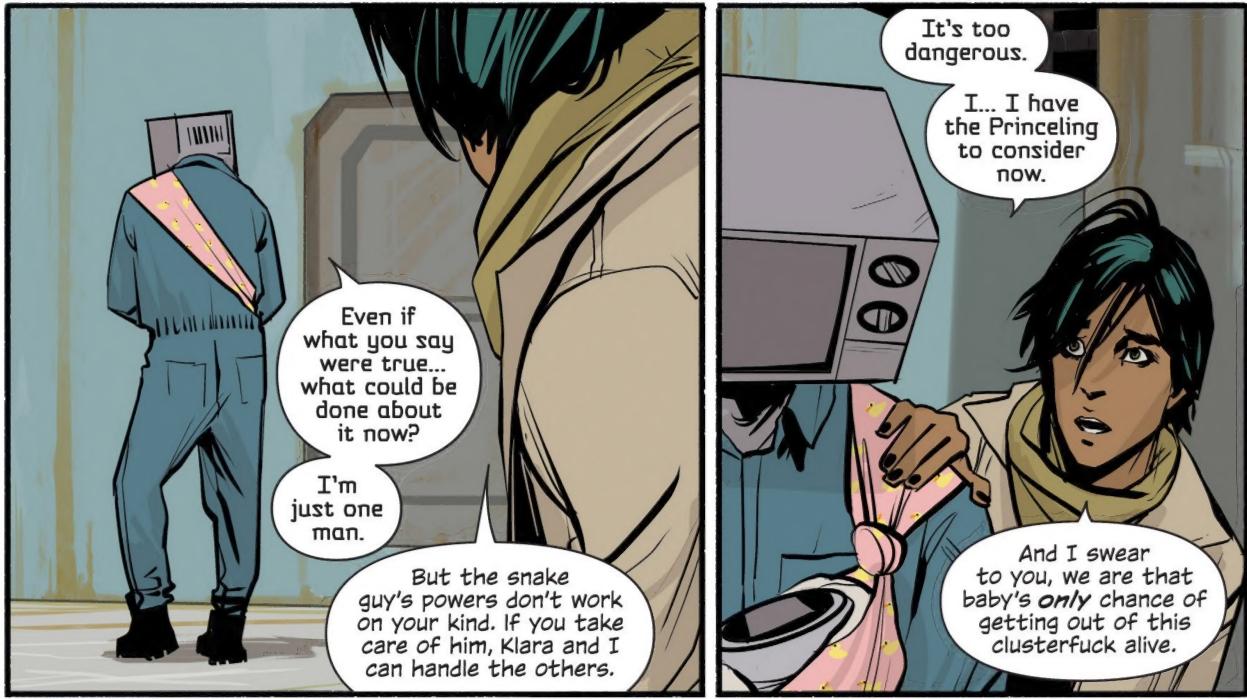




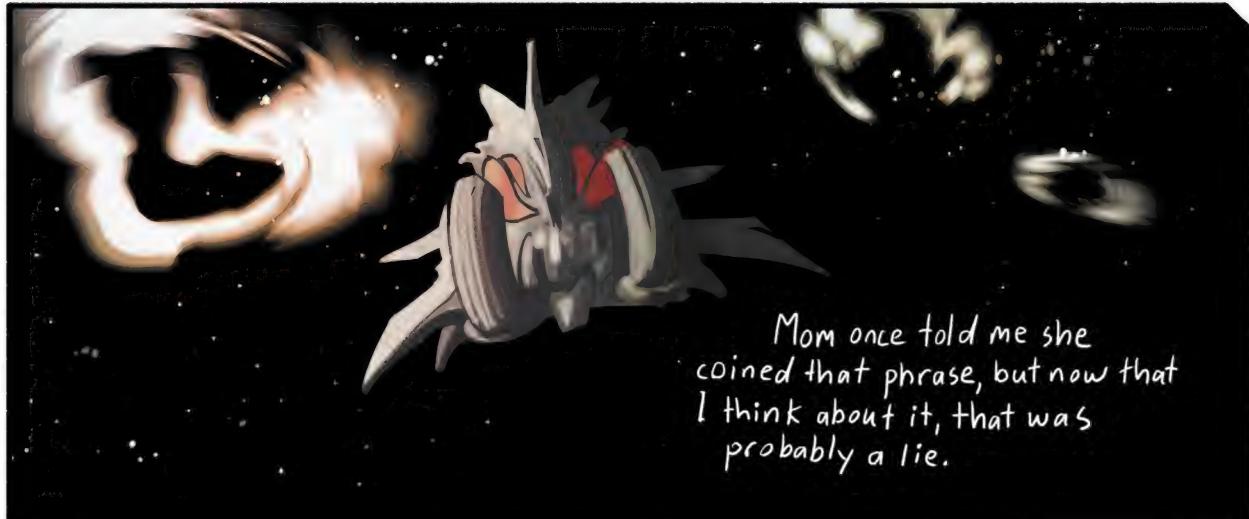


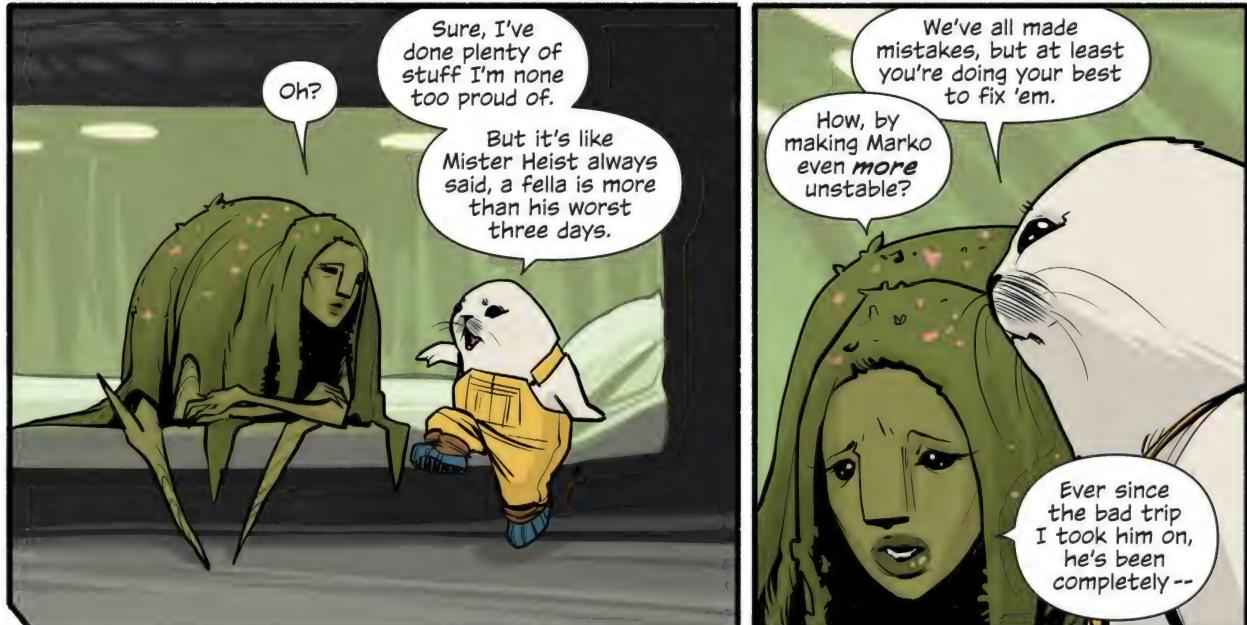


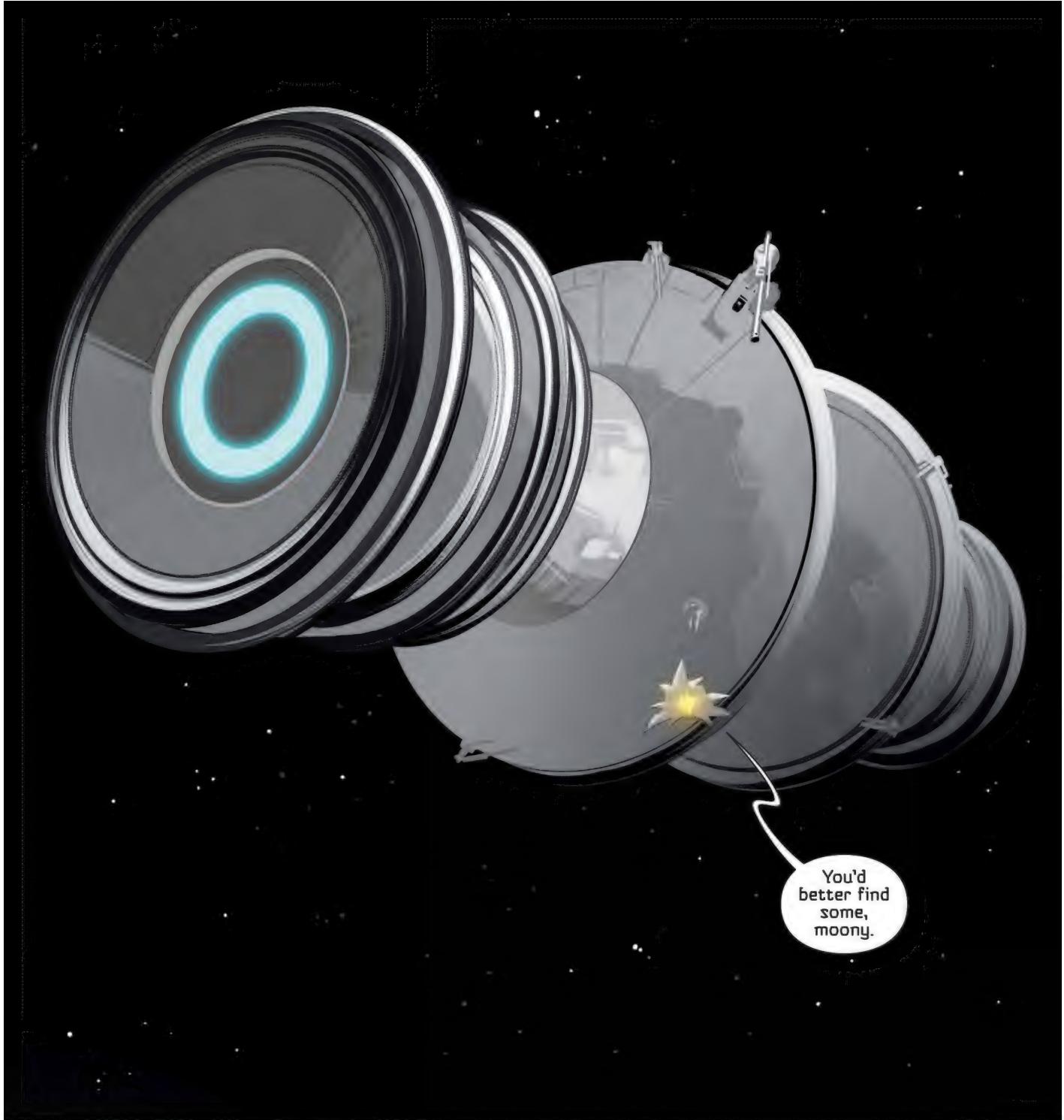








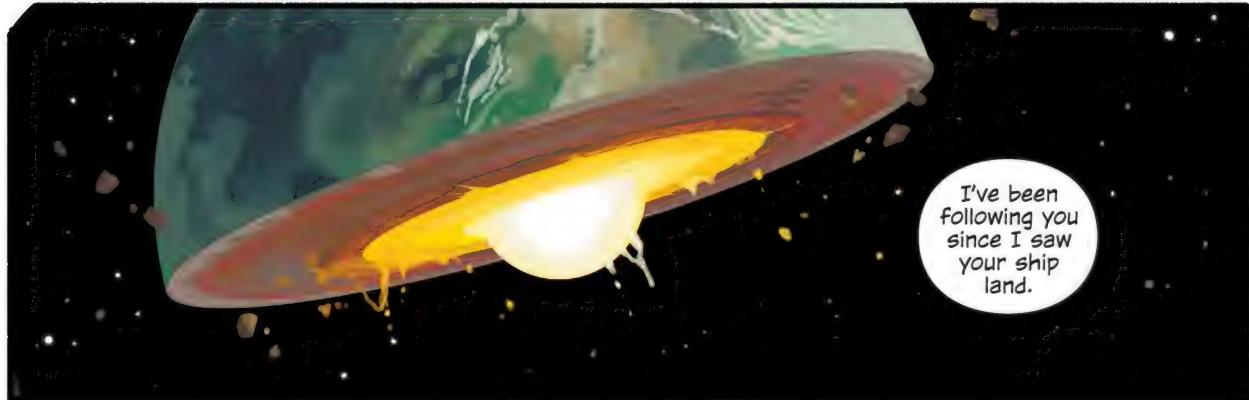




You'd better find some, moony.







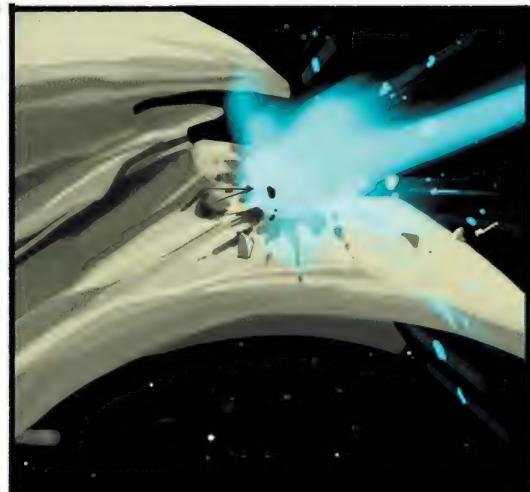




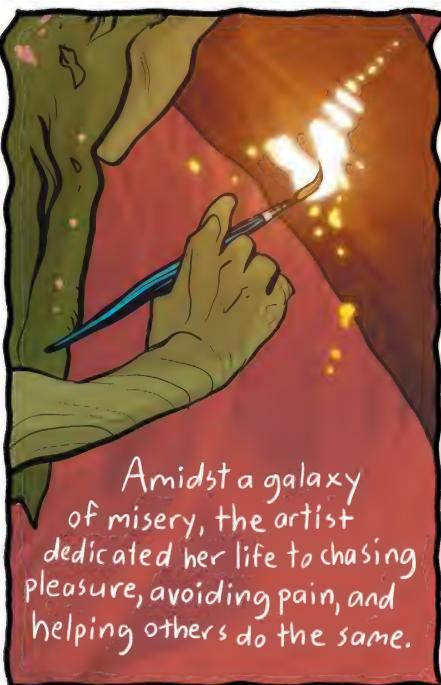


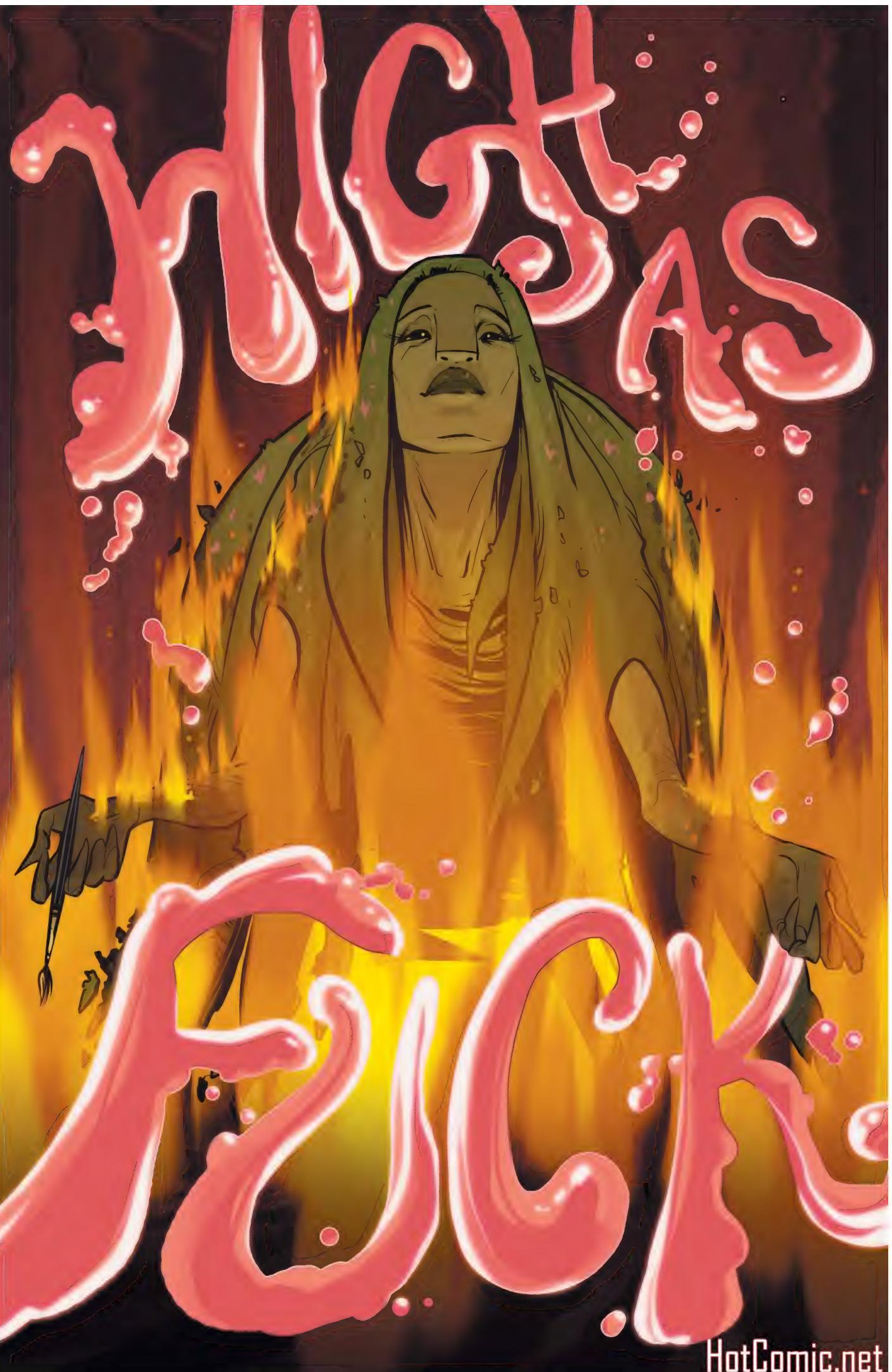












TO BE CONTINUED

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Ah, hell.

How about a moment of silence for our dearly departed drug-dependent dame?

...

Cheers. BKV here, staring down at a capacity mailbag, so let's get to it.

Dear Fiona and Brian,

Just dropping you a postcard to say thanks for my new favorite comic. And thanks to BookTube for the recommendation!

XOX,

Millie

Corpus Christi, TX

Thanks so much, Millie. I am much too old and computer-illiterate to even know where to find BookTube, but more readers have mentioned it to me as the place where they first heard about *Saga* than any other source, so I'm indebted to anyone who's part of whatever the hell this apparently vibrant and highly literate community is.

Dear BKV,

I noticed a minor error on page 16 of *Saga* Chapter Twenty-Five. Marko identifies Ghüs as a "shepherd." Of course, as everyone knows, a shepherd is someone who herds sheep. The word itself is an amalgam of "sheep herder." Ghüs, however, herds walruses. Therefore, he should be described as a "walrus herder" or perhaps "walrusherd."

Allow me to propose an explanation: the writer of *Saga* is a lazy hack! Where's my No Prize?

Love,

Vida Van Daugh

Maryland

If it isn't my old nemesis/former childhood friend Vida. Nice try with the No Prize, Van Daugh, but your dictionary should inform you that a shepherd can also be defined as "someone who provides spiritual guidance to a congregation," which is much closer to the service ol' Ghüs performs for his loyal flock of Walrus Friends.

Anyway, see you in a few weeks for that thing. Also, I hate you.

Dear Brian and Fiona,

Here I sit with Issue #25 open on the table before me. I picked it up earlier with the new Star Wars and have since read through it twice. Who is the Revolution? Who?! Sigh... March 4th... I think I need to put myself into cryosleep until then.

I am writing this letter to the two of you because there is an address here on the last page and... well why the hell not? Your creation is the first comic book single that I have ever purchased. I was never huge into comics until recently (though I read fantasy and sci-fi all the time). I had read certain well-known ones. *Watchmen*, *Bone*, *The Long Halloween*, but never got into a monthly pull like I am now in with *Saga*. I picked up the first three trades at my local library after reading a review of the first one by Patrick Rothfuss on Goodreads. It blew me away. Your mixture of science fiction and fantasy is brilliant, and leaves enough to the imagination to make me hungry for more. Your characters, Brian, are fully realized and so distinctive. Fiona, you bring to life this comic in a way I don't think anyone else could. It's truly brilliant.

After reading through those first three volumes I went to Barnes & Noble and bought the fourth. I devoured it of course. Then I was left with a hole in my heart. A hole that I filled by reading your Y: The Last Man series, Brian. (Which was great by the way. What an ending!) And now finally, issue #25 was released.

So here I sit wishing for more. You're on record saying you want this to be your longest series. (Aren't you? I thought I read that. Am I making that up?) That truly excites me because I'll read this thing 'til the day I die. Seriously. I'm 21 and I'm really hoping *Saga* is still going when I'm 30. A guy can dream right? Anyway, this was my big rambling thank you for writing a series that I have connected with on a level that I have for very few others. Can't wait for issue #26!

Love,

Bryan D.

Toledo, OH

P.S. I apologize if my handwriting got progressively worse as I wrote this. I also hope that I addressed the envelope correctly.

Goodreads! That's another non-corporeal site I'm too dumb to access, but still greatly appreciate for spreading the love, especially if big-time authors like Patrick Rothfuss are saying nice things.

Much obliged for the kind words, Bryan, and yeah, I have detailed plans for Hazel for at least the next decade, but there's obviously no *Saga* without Fiona, so our story ends the day that Staples says it does (or when you fine folks get sick of us, whichever comes first).

Dear Brian & Fiona,

I just want to thank you guys. I am a lover of art and a great story... and you guys took the two, mated it with the solar system, boobs, the two greatest people to become a couple (besides the hopeful romance between The Will and I), a seal wearing galoshes, and dirty wild sex... and violence... and...

I am giving up because there really is nothing I can find that I don't like in this series. I just started reading comics, like in January, and now the comic store guys know me by my name, and I think I'm beginning to annoy them, although I sometimes feel out of place (I just found out that collections are called "trade paperbacks" and what a "deadpool" was).

However, with your comic, I am able to talk to people who know TONS about comic books with understanding and enthusiasm. Like: "OMG THAT SPIDER BITCH WAS SO AMAZINGLY THOUGHT UP AND DRAWN... BUT SLUT TOOK MY MAN!!!"

I am noticing that this letter is also now textually slanting and the ink is getting darker... Anyways... through this work of art which is so SAGAUCIOUS I have found a new love for reading, drawing, and a new group of people who are so cool. Never stop being awesome. Also, ideas:

- The Will falls for a redhead named Lindsay.
Thoughts? — I agree! Great!
- Ghüs is real!
- More on Sextillion (more sex in general. Also, more sex)
- How in the fuck to the TV princes eat? (not an idea)

Actually, now I just sound weirder than I am. Hi, I am Lindsay! I am 25 and work in the National Violent Death Reporting System. Duh. And I am a forensic molecular biologist who now loves comics. I am a creepy nerd and I love your comic Saga.

Much thanks,

Lindsay

Altamont, NY

P.S. Watch the movie Ink (2009). The TV creeps in there remind me of Dengo.

Altamont, everybody.

Dear Brian K. Vaughan,

I'm 12. I love your books and Lost. My favorite book that you wrote is Y: The Last Man. I like that book the most because of the story. I'm also writing my own book, ATLAS AND THE FIRE HOLE. I hope my book gets published one day because I want to be a writer like you.

- 1) Have you started any new books? If so, what are they?
- 2) How long have you been writing?
- 3) When did you start?
- 4) Do you like dogs? I have a poodle.
- 5) Cats?
- 6) What is your favorite book you have worked on?
- 7) Least?
- 8) What book took the longest?
- 9) Where did you get the idea for Y: The Last Man or Saga?
- 10) Do you play any video games? Which ones?

Sincerely,

Elijah N.

League City, TX

Twelve! You're too cool for words, Elijah. "Atlas and the Fire Hole" is a killer title, so I hope the writing is going well. Here are some answers to your excellent questions:

1) Yes! I've got two new books coming out from Image this very year. My futuristic Canadian military thriller WE STAND ON GUARD with legendary artist Steve Skroce and our own

Fonografiks comes out this July, and in September, my old pal Cliff Chiang and I are starting a new ongoing series called PAPER GIRLS, about some badass adventurers who also happen to be 12 years old.

2) I've been writing professionally since I was 19, when I got my first paycheck from Marvel Comics thanks to then-editor James "The Professor" Felder, who was wise enough to search outside the industry for enthusiastic (and cheap) new voices.

3) I always loved telling stories, but I really started writing when I was your age. My 6th Grade teacher Mr. Koenig encouraged me to enter the Dobama Theater's Marilyn Bianchi Kids' Playwriting Festival, where I was lucky enough to receive a sweet \$100 savings bond for my crummy play. The experience was life changing because it taught me what writing is all about: winning awards and making fat cash.

4) I love dogs! And my miniature wiener dog Hamburger K. Vaughan happens to be married to a poodle.

5) Well, I like fictional cats.

6) Books are like children, so I most love whichever one the other kids are least nice to. *Pride of Baghdad* seems to be a particularly polarizing work, so I'll always hold it extra-close to my heart.

7) Mark Waid once taught me never to admit which work is your least favorite, because it could always be the book of yours that someone out there likes best... so no comment.

8) There was a standalone issue of *Ultimate X-Men* that made me want to set myself on fire. Maybe it's because I knew one of my idols, Steve Dillon, was going to be drawing it, but I just completely forgot how to write that month, and the script took agonizing weeks of shower-crying to complete. But I think it turned out okay, entirely thanks to Mr. Dillon.

9) From spending most of my time hanging out with members of the opposite sex, which I can't recommend enough to all writers/humans.

10) I used to play a lot of video games, but then I realized that beating a boss level gave me the exact same feeling of accomplishment as finishing something I was writing, which is very dangerous for folks in our profession. You can still play them if you want, but not until you finish your five pages for the day, cool?

Good luck, Elijah!

Dear Brian and Fiona,

I am glad you appreciated the picture I sent of two elephants fucking. It was the second best image I have ever seen, trumped only by Fiona's illustration of a rollerblading goddess, anally exhaling the cosmos into existence (*Opening page of Saga #22*).

I am writing you again today, not just to fawn over Fiona's stunning work, but because I sent a one-of-a-kind gift, and then realized that you both can't own it. I can't help thinking there has been some fighting over it, and that whoever won it (I am picturing a series of elaborate competitions) has animosity against the person who didn't win it. I'm imagining a Beatles like break-up scenario of my favorite comic, but instead of being Yoko, it's a vintage photo of fornicating pachyderms.

Well I can't live with that on my conscience so I am sending something equally cool, to whichever of you didn't get the photo. Enjoy.

Huge Fan,

Al Wurst
Warren, MI

Hey again, Al! Thumbs up for the vintage erotic comic "The Farmers Dauwter" you were nice enough to send, but thumbs down for the unfair dig at Ms. Ono, especially because her amazing conceptual art piece "Play It By Trust" helped shape my still-cooking idea for *Saga* when I first saw that work years ago.

Anyway, I think I'll give your porno comic to Fonografiks, the soulful George of our quartet.

Hello To Be Continued,

A few years ago, I heard that one of the lost guys had an epic comic series about the last man on Earth, so I had to check it out and I wasn't disappointed. Then when I heard that same guy (you, BTW!) had a space opera coming out, I was on board with issue #1. You and my fellow countryperson Fiona Staples consistently deliver. The time between issues of *Saga* is painful.

I'd like to thank you and everyone else involved with this series for sharing your creativity with the world. Which brings me to my next point.

I'd also like to share my creativity with the world. You see, it took a number of years but I finally wrote my first novel, a funny sci-fi book that plays with many of the genre tropes you'd come to expect: robots, time-travel, spaceships...

After receiving a handful of rejection letters, I finally got signed by Champagne Books, a small publisher from Alberta. My novel, *The Predicates of Fate* came out as an e-book in May 2014 with the stipulation that once I sold 100 copies, they would trigger a paperback run. Sadly, I'm only a quarter of the way there.

I've plastered social media, handed out little flyers at my local Comic-Con (including a quick chat about my book with Mr. Reading Rainbow himself, LeVar Burton), left business cards at two comic shops... but selling copies is hard, man!

This might not be the best forum in which to ask, and I'd hate to set a precedent for everyone to hawk their wares in this column, but I'd be remiss if I didn't at least attempt to enlist your help in order to reach my magic number of 100. The book is for sale at major e-book sites (Amazon, iTunes, etc) as well as through the publisher's site.

And it's only \$3!

Thanks so much for the wonderful comics you produce (keep them coming!) and for any help you can provide a budding writer.

Have fun,
Vrej Hezaran
Brossard, Quebec
Canada

Sold, in no small part because your e-book has such a boss cover, Vrej. Anyone else out there want to help a member of our tribe hit 100?

Dear BKV & *Saga* Team,

I'm writing this after reading issue #25, grateful to you for your creation, and for not going the alternate cover route.

Enclosed is my reader survey, too late for your results compilation, I'm sure, but grateful also for the opportunity

nonetheless. Had I enclosed the torn-out page, you'd have a bit of paper that traveled to Al Udeid Air Force Base, Qatar (and back), but alas, I'm a collector.

It's late, in fact, because I've been "arc-waiting" with the ongoing series, but I won't make that mistake again, your book is too good to wait for. Which is the reason I shipped the first one or two (issues #19/20) to Qatar for company on deployment while Mile High Comics was kind enough to send the rest.

Enough context... I'm writing because issue #25 hit two distinct chords with me: the distance between citizens and their warfighters, and the distance between a father and his daughter. I can't imagine spending another week away from my wife and daughter, let alone six months, and yet I know the Air Force will send me again before my career is out. This is not a complaint, but an observation. A reflection that I may feel equally as resigned to a second deployment as many people feel about the state of perpetual war. Which is why I appreciate work such as yours to remind and inspire love amidst turmoil, creation (art) over destruction, and hope throughout.

Oh yeah, and if you're going to do something, do it well.
With you for the haul,

Brian E. Hans
Hanscom AFB, MA

Man, I don't know what to say, Brian (and not just because I'm never sure if a "thanks for your service" sounds grating from do-nothing civilians like me), but I'm very grateful for this letter.

Hello, Past Brian K. Vaughan,

That's right, you better believe it. It's me... FUTURE Brian K. Vaughan. I know you're probably shocked and have all sorts of questions for me, probably something down the lines of, "What is the future like?", right? Well I don't have time for that! All you need to know is time travel is possible in the near future and I've sent this letter back in time with an important message. Also, I guess I do have time for that last question: the future is awesome.

I've sent this letter back in time to tell you that your decisions to reunite Marko, Alana, Hazel, Izabel, and Klara; have *The Will* make a miraculous recovery; create an immediate peace treaty between Wreath and Landfall; and have everyone live happily ever after will be some of the best decisions you've ever made! You will be super happy you decided to do that, so please follow through in the next issue, okay?

I would have sent a longer message, but time-traveling letters are expensive, and the post office sucks... still.

Okay, okay, fun's over. Great series, I'll have you know I've never purchased a comic until *Saga* Chapter 25. Your team does great work and you should all know that somewhere, someone can come home once a month from a job he hates to a piece of work he loves. Thank you for giving me something to look forward to.

Regards,
C.J.M.
Colorado Springs, CO

Thanks, CJ. You guys are too kind... literally. There's officially way too much love in *To Be Continued* of recent, as everyone knows that hatred is much more fun to read than praise. Do

people just not want to waste a stamp on complaints? This letter column is in desperate need of some vitriol, so please send your negative comments our way, and I'll try to dedicate an entire future T.B.C. to nothing but anger, mean-spiritedness, and disappointment in our hard work.

But for now, just a little more love...

Greetings to the Saga team!

I wanted to share a bit about why *Saga* is important to me. When I first started reading *Saga*, I was also reading an English translation of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things). It's the most complete extant account of Epicurean philosophy, and it starts out with an appeal to Venus. First, he points out that every living thing comes into being through Venus' auspices (by creatures having sex with each other), so he says he needs Venus' aid in the generative act of composing his poem. Then he says that only Venus can bring mortals peace, because even Mars must lay his head down in her lap, overcome by the "eternal wound of love." (This all has a point, I promise).

Now, the Epicureans were sort of theists. In addition to arguing that you should believe in the gods that your society believes in, because it's not worth the disruption to your life that it causes to dispute with people about their gods, they seem to have believed that gods actually exist, but they exist in some sort of shared mental space (and gods are not particularly inclined to interact with humans). Their proof of gods' existence is that people see them in dreams and when they dream of a specific god, everyone dreams of the same being. They were materialists, so they believed that everything that exists is materially caused, so there must be a material god somewhere that interacts with the material of the dreaming mind to create the image. This doesn't hold up super well if you analyze it literally from a contemporary perspective. Of course everyone dreams of the same god, everyone is exposed to the same religious iconography! But later in the book, Lucretius insists that gods are not actors who punish or reward mortals, they are better understood as a kind of metaphor for the concepts they are supposed to represent. So, if you squint a little bit, in contemporary terms, an Epicurean god is a culturally shared symbol/myth/metaphor by which abstract concepts can be explored (similar to how, when well-written, a Batman story can explore the idea of justice and vengeance, or a Spider-Man story can explore the nature of power and responsibility).

So, when Lucretius talks about Venus being responsible for all generative acts (procreation as well as creativity), he is saying that love, sex, eroticism, desire, when enacted, produce offspring, yes, but also art, philosophy, knowledge. This was both refreshing and exciting to me to read because so much of our culture understands evolution as a merely competitive process—survival of the fittest—focusing on competition for scarce resources and avoiding predation, which ignores how very common (and I would say more typical) cooperation is in nature (the couple of actual biologists I've talked with about this don't ignore the cooperative element of evolution, I'm talking more about pop science and the way evolution exists in our cultural headspace). And if creatures (and even plants) cooperate, they must have evolved to cooperate.

And when he says that Mars is overcome by Venus, he is indicating that the path to end both local (even domestic) strife and large-scale conflict is through love, eroticism, and

creativity.

And right after being blown away by the beautiful metaphor that Lucretius constructs, I picked up *Saga*. And reading it deepened and enriched the flash of insight that I'd gotten from Lucretius. I love that Marko is a pacifist. It disturbs me the degree to which our culture, our movies, TV shows, comic books, even our discourse about public policy, embraces a kind of sanitized violence as a one-size-fits-all solution to problems. I say "sanitized violence" because rarely are the consequences of violence ever shown... people crying and bleeding and slowly dying, families losing loved ones and so on (I think Game of Thrones is good for resisting the sanitization of violence, but A Song of Ice and Fire is even better). So it was refreshing to see a pacifist character who has to struggle with his ideals. I love that you're depicting this world where one couple's love and their having a baby together (Venus) is resisting the "Mars" of the leadership of Landfall and Wreath. And I love that you're depicting how love isn't easy (I love Lucretius' turn of phrase, "the eternal wound of love"). When Prince Robot IV realized that the opposite of war is fucking, I cheered to myself. And... while the death of The Stalk was shocking (who is so daring as to introduce such an awesome character only to kill her off almost immediately?), and the almost-death of Lying Cat was nerve wracking (lucky for me, I didn't have to wait weeks to find out that it was an almost-death), the death of D. Oswald Heist is right up there with the other fictional deaths that have got me and stuck with me. The death of Spock in Star Trek II (which I saw on VHS when I was 12) is one, the death of [redacted for Game of Thrones spoiler] (which I read when I was 22-ish?) is another. It's... really something when an author writes a death that matters because the character matters... and the death isn't just like... background noise to show how high the stakes are for our (invincible) heroes. Of course, all too often, that death is reversed in the sequel. Looking at you, Star Trek III.

Anyway, that's enough of my gushing about how much I love *Saga*. Thank you for reading my rambling thoughts, and thank you for a beautiful book!

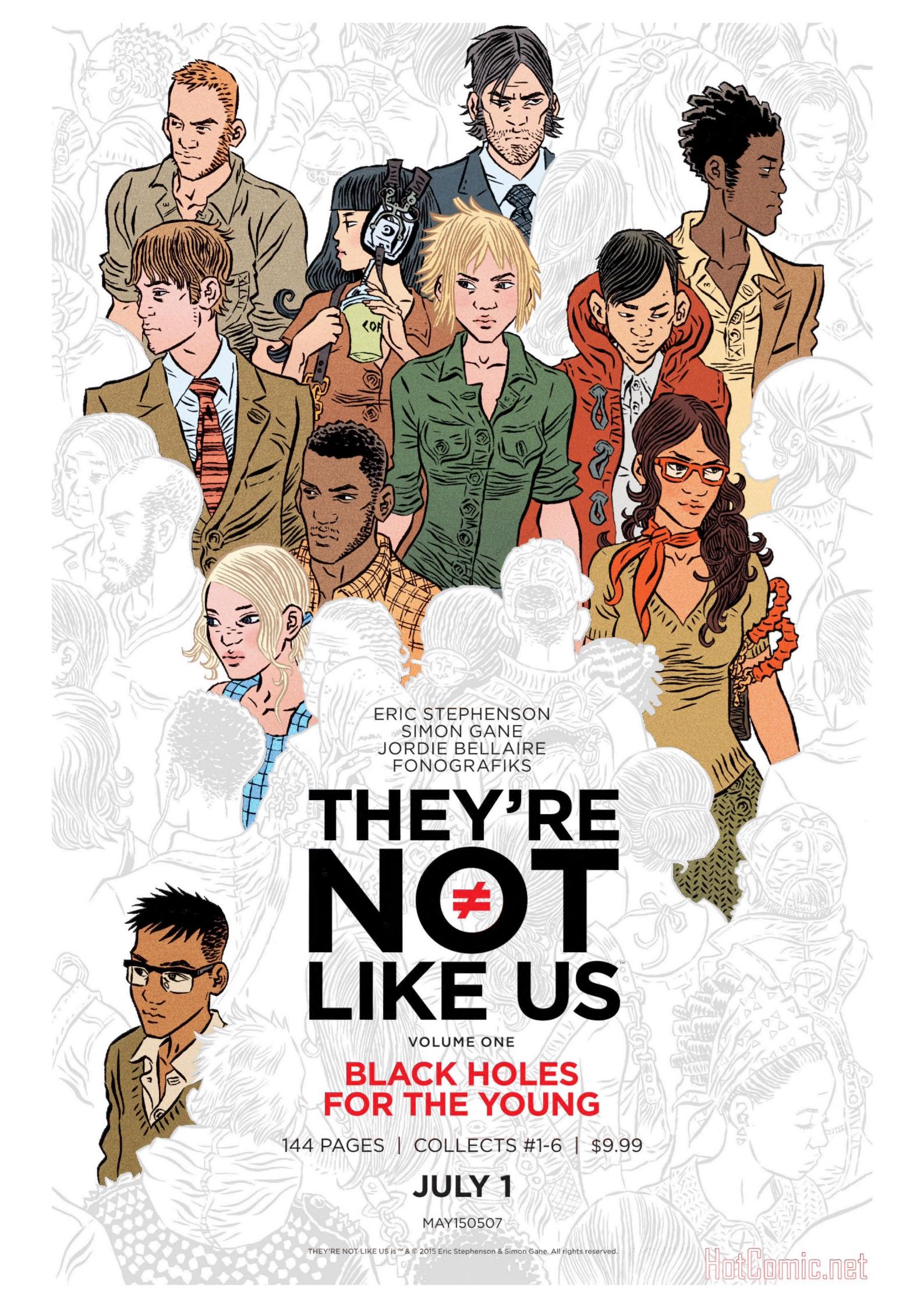
Don Morman
Winnipeg, MB
Canada

Holy shit. A missive worthy of the gods, Don.

For your astoundingly thoughtful letter, Hamburger has named YOU winner of this month's rubbish from the Almighty Prize Drawer: my 2014 visitor pass to VOX Media/The Verge, some drunkenly handwritten notes for Chapter Twenty-six I made on Vegas hotel stationery, and most excitingly, 500 JAMAICAN DOLLARS (worth about five bucks Canadian, sorry).

Okay, that's all for this chapter, but next month, an issue where nobody you care about dies.

Maybe.
Or maybe not,
Brian



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